3: Janashia I-5 (ca. 1900) 1937 RI3 Abkhas RI3
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[196] sacrificial maize-cakes. Also on this day, in the early evening, are prepared from the above-mentioned leaven many *à-khwazhwə*, and three loaves, made in the shape, respectively, of the moon, the sun, and *alaẖwara*.[1] In the latter are placed as many *aklakùt-s* (little [243] wooden hammers, models of those used in threshing millet, or maize) as there are women in the family and an extra one symbolizing the desire for their increase. This correlation of the number of hammers [469] with the number of women in the family arose, of course, from the fact that the threshing of millet was the woman's job. Soups of phasel and of fresh nettle (*à-khwats*) are also prepared. On this day no edible [189] herb of any kind is allowed to be consumed, or used in cooking; [263] *dsdsəm*, the Abkhasians say, that is, "it is not proper," "it is forbidden" (in Megrelian *vashiners*).

[512] Late in the afternoon, when the cattle have returned from the fields, the prayers begin.

(*a*) *Antswà-ẖwa* (for God).[2]

The whole family gathers together. On the threshold of the [340] house, *àishwa*, is placed a long and narrow table (in Megrelian *tabaki*), [350] on which are laid all the eatables described above. Behind this little table stands the head of the family, and behind him all the other members. The wax candles are lighted. The head of the family takes three *à-khwazhwə*, and, addressing *Antswà*, God, prays that His favours and bounties may be showered upon his family, etc. The family repeat with him, *àämen*. These cakes are put aside.

(*b*) *Àyt'ar*.

After this the head of the family takes three new *a-khwazhwə*, and says: *Wa, Àyt'ar—bzhwàyt'ar! bzhyə-nɔ̀khak zənàp-yanù, bzhyə* [539] *—tswəmzàk zzəkədr—dso*, etc., "*O, Àyt'ar—seven Àyt'ar, in the hands of whom are seven icons (to whom are subject seven gods), and to whom are lit seven candles,"—be thou the guardian of our herds! Multiply them so that we may milk seven men's load of milk! Let no harm come to our herd, except the old wool and old dung!* etc. The introduction, given in Abkhasian, is uttered by all, while everybody improvises the rest of the supplication as best they can, repeating the mystic number [196] seven every minute. As is shown by the introduction *Àyt'ar* is the head [80] of a group of seven gods. The number seven appears in many prayers.[3]

[243] [1] *Alaẖwara*—a large mortar (Geo. *tchashwi*) in which millet (*ghomi*) is husked.

[2] *Ians* is an abbreviated form of the word denoting "he says"; cf. the Russian *govt* heard in the existing colloquial speech.

[193] [3] All this, and the fact that the Abkhasians up to this day still pray to the moon and the sun, makes us wonder whether the septenary *Àyt'ar* is closely connected with the Babylono-Assyrian septenary of gods, particularly as the names of the gods *Aa*, *Anu—Antswà*, and *Istar—Àyt'ar*, are very similar, while the moon and the sun are included in both pleiades.

[821] [191]